

Brickhill Borough Councillors Report to Parish Council February 2026

**From Charles Royden
and Wendy Rider**



Bedford Borough Council Rethinks Council Budget

Under the Conservative led administration, Bedford Borough Council is stumbling from one financial crisis to another. The Mayor has now created a black hole of £55million as he cannot pay the bills. After only two years of spending more than he can afford, it is devastating to see our council

bankrupt. The Mayor inherited a council with outstanding finances and he is now going to the government with a begging bowl. The worst news is that residents are going to have to pay it back with interest for many years, with maximum increases on their council tax.

At the full council meeting on 4 February councillors from across parties; Liberal Democrats, Labour, Green and Independent parties, all told the Mayor in no uncertain terms that his finance proposals were not fit for purpose and could not be supported. The failure of this administration to produce a proper plan to rescue the council from this crisis significantly increases the risk of government intervention and the loss of local control. Make no mistake the incompetence of the Conservatives to manage the finances of this council have put services across the council at risk. Already the Mayor has suspended free parking, reduced grants, initiated job losses and made cuts to services. Increasingly the impact will be felt by residents, council staff, voluntary organisations and businesses across the borough. The Conservatives will not easily be forgiven for this mismanagement of our Borough. This is not about party politics or point-scoring, it is about the abject failure of leadership by those elected to keep essential services running and the council solvent.

Councillors from across the political divide spoke at council about the failure of the Mayor and his administration to work across parties. They bemoaned the lack of consultation, how their warnings of have been ignored. There has been a complete refusal to engage in cross-party dialogue and the blame lies firmly with the current administration.



Brickhill Residents are voting on the Neighbourhood Plan

Brickhill residents are voting on the Brickhill Neighbourhood Plan. We welcome this opportunity to let Brickhill residents have the chance to shape their own future. However, residents advise us that they have had difficulty

accessing information with incorrect QR codes and missing links in literature. All Brickhill Borough Councillors, Charles, Wendy, David and Henry have encouraged residents to vote to FOR the Plan and we have sought to advertise the access point to the information on our website www.puttingbrickhillfirst.com

It protects our green spaces Key parks, ponds and open areas get stronger legal protection from development.

It helps keep Brickhill's character Only small, sensible infill is supported — no big estates. Bungalows and homes for older residents are protected.

It supports local shops & facilities It helps keep Brickhill Drive and Avon Drive thriving, and strengthens the case for things like a GP or dentist.

It backs sustainable travel & good design Better walking routes, greener building standards, and protection for wildlife.

It gives Brickhill a stronger voice Developers and the Borough Council must take our plan into account when making decisions.

The Plan helps keep Brickhill green, well designed and community focused. Importantly, it gives residents real influence over future development. For these reasons, we support the Neighbourhood Plan.

However, we would encourage the Parish Council, as a matter of urgency to support the inclusion of land off Ashmead Road, known as Jackman's Farm. We are aware that boundary changes brought this into Brickhill Parish more recently, however, it is now integral to the enjoyment of our residents as an important open

green space with planted woodland. Our own residents helped us plant the trees themselves and we must oppose those who seek to sell off a valuable community amenity to help cover uncontrolled council spending. At the latest full council meeting on 4 February, the Conservatives used the sale of Jackman's Farm as a threat to demand support for their budget, despite having promised that it would not be sold at the previous meeting. This was in spite of councillors from all other parties, including independent councillors, condemning the Conservative budget as a complete failure and refusing to support it.



Avon Drive Resurfacing Problems

We updated you on the problems with potholes appearing on the new road resurfacing on Avon Drive. This was caused by a material failure and the council contractor Heidelberg Materials patched the worst areas at the end of last year to ensure safety whilst investigations were ongoing into the cause of the failure. The cause of the failure is still being investigated. However, they will return and resurface the works as the material is defective. We expect another road closure in March for the contractor to complete the remedial works.

Please note, as we requested, the Council have assured us that work will be completed entirely at the contractor's expense and there will be no cost to the council for redoing the work. Between now and March, it is likely some further localised testing will take place on site to determine the cause of the failure. We will keep you updated.

Brickhill Graffiti

We are facing an epidemic of graffiti in Brickhill which we have asked the police to make a top issue at the recent priority setting meeting at police headquarters. The council graffiti cleaning machine was out of action and we have asked for this to now be directed towards Brickhill as a matter of urgency. We would be delighted to receive information which leads to those responsible being apprehended by the police. If you have any knowledge of those responsible please contact the police or your Borough Councillors in confidence.

Council Cuts to Speed Enforcement

The Mayor has said that parish councils must take over the cost of maintenance of average speed cameras in their areas. This means that Brickhill Parish Council must be responsible for the ongoing cost of the cameras including their regular calibration. This is grossly unfair given that unparished areas of the town will not be

faced with the same costs. It is effectively another tax by the Conservatives. The downgrading of speed enforcement as a priority for the council will also include scrapping the council speed enforcement van established by the former Mayor Dave Hodgson. This vehicle has been successfully deployed in places such as Avon Drive. We deplore the lack of importance given to speed enforcement because we know how important this issue is to our residents. We will do all we can on the council to ensure that this decision is reversed.

Parking around St Thomas More School

We have received numerous complaints about the parking problems created by inconsiderate parents collecting children from St Thomas More School. Parking on pavements is dangerous and causes damage to verges. Some roads such as Moriston Road are also clearly unsuitable to be used by large numbers of vehicles waiting for passengers. We have asked the council for additional enforcement and would appreciate this issue being raised with Bedford Borough Council by the Parish Council to add weight to our request.

Request for benches

Following the cut to ward funds by the Mayor we are unable to proceed with the request for a bench at Avon Drive shops. This is disappointing as we managed after two years to get all of the permissions from the council in place. We would ask that the parish council takes this issue forward as it is of considerable importance to many residents, especially the elderly.

We have also been asked by residents if a bench provision could be made on the green at Merlin Gardens. We are aware that this would require consultation with residents and this would be welcomed by many residents who enjoy this beautiful green but have no place to sit.

Changes to Waste Collections

Bedford Borough Council are changing your waste collections and residents have told us they are worried about what is happening. This is especially a difficulty for

residents on the Carron Road Estate who have experienced problems including obtaining waste bags and lack of information on the new food collections. We are extremely concerned at the prospect of charging £56 for collecting green waste and the proposal for three weekly black bin collections. We will keep council advised on future proposals and help residents obtain better support.



Help us keep in touch

It is always helpful to be able to inform residents of Brickhill with updates via our email list and if you have not yet signed up for this yet then please do so as this is the best way for us to keep in touch. We won't bombard you and you can unsubscribe at any time. Sign up here

www.bedfordlibdems.org.uk/sign-up

We always aim to respond to residents the same day or within 24hrs. If you haven't had a reply to an email please call us because they can go astray.

Avon Drive Shops Saturday 14 February 10.00am
Brickhill Drive Shops Saturday 28 February 10.00am
Avon Drive Shops Saturday 14 March 10.00am
Brickhill Drive Shops Saturday 28 March 10.00am
Avon Drive Shops Saturday 11 April 10.00am
Brickhill Drive Shops Saturday 25 April 10.00am
Avon Drive Shops Saturday 9 May 10.00am

*You can also speak with us or another Lib Dem Councillor
every Saturday morning 11.00am - 12 noon at Bedford Central Library*

Wendy Rider - Brickhill Borough Councillor

23 Orwell Close, Brickhill, MK41 7BQ
01234 303254 wendyrider41@gmail.com

Charles Royden - Brickhill Borough Councillor

The Vicarage, Calder Rise, Brickhill. MK41 7UY
07973113861 charlesroyden@gmail.com

Working all year round, not just at election time !

Printed, Published and Promoted by Charles Royden on behalf of the Liberal Democrats
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